

**“As the Internet population continues to grow and diversify, etiquette will become increasingly important. Strong etiquette online is no longer just nice to have; it is necessary.”**

—Jenny Preece,  
professor of information systems  
at the University of Maryland



# Netiquette

**O**ur digital world makes it easy to stay in touch and share friendships, memories, and ideas. But we’ve all heard embarrassing stories in which people wish they’d never hit the “send” button. Once you’ve put it out there, it never goes away. But you can use that to your benefit, too. This badge is all about knowing how to make positive choices in the online world.

## Steps

1. Explore “oops!” and “wow!” moments
2. Dig into stories of “ouch”—and repair some hurt if necessary
3. Look at e-mail, commenting, or blogging
4. Decide what makes a great social media profile
5. Spread better practices

## Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll know how to make—and keep—my online world a positive place.



When you're online, whether from your phone, computer, PDA, or gaming device, it's essential to know whether you are in public or private space. And it's not always easy to tell! Before you dig into this badge, have an expert talk to your group about how to know whether online spaces are public or private and how to use settings and filters on various sites and devices. You might ask a:

- **School computer teacher**
- **Computer security expert** who's someone's friend, family, or neighbor
- **Professor** at a local college or university
- **IT (information technology) specialist** at any workplace that uses a lot of computers

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

### Tips Before Takeoff:

- ▶ Whenever you do a choice that involves going online, do so with a trusted adult. And be sure to **sign your Internet Safety Pledge** before you begin this badge.
- ▶ Grab a journal and **get ready to gather tips** for your own list of "Netiquette Rules to Live By." In steps 1–4, you'll create your list of tips, and in step 5, you'll share them with others.

## STEP 1 Explore "oops!" and "wow!" moments

**Oops! It happens every day—somebody hits "send" or posts something that causes anger, hurt, or embarrassment for herself and others. To kick off this badge, explore the impact of an "oops." Look for the "wow" moments, too: Online communications can cause as much good as not-so-good. Add to your list the tips you find on avoiding the oopses and increasing the wows.**

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Brainstorm some "oops" and "wow" tips with friends.** Spend at least a half hour sharing these two kinds of moments—those you've heard about from friends or family or those you've read about. Then discuss what tips you can learn from these real-life stories, and add them to your list.

**FOR MORE FUN:** Survey your friends and family before your discussion, and bring the stories they share. (You could also do a survey in class or at lunch, asking for anonymous responses.)

**OR** .....

- Interview someone with a job that involves sending lots of e-mails.** Find out their stories of "oops" in the workplace. What happened, and what were the consequences? Do they have any tips on avoiding the "oops" moments? Ask for an on-the-job moment when digital communication has caused good.

**FOR MORE FUN:** It's hard to tell the tone of a message when you can't hear someone's voice. Read an e-mail out loud three times, using a different intonation each time (such as friendly, angry, or busy). Does it seem like a different message each time? Brainstorm ideas for adding emotional cues to written messages so they come across as "wow" instead of "ouch."

**OR** .....

- Read four published stories.** First, find two stories about people who've sent or posted messages that caused hurt—for themselves, for others, for family, or for their job. What have those involved learned? Now look for two stories about how online communication has caused good. (Ask a librarian for some recommendations if you need help finding stories.)

**STEP**

## **2** Dig into stories of “ouch”—and repair some hurt if necessary

Take a closer look at how online communications can be misunderstood, resulting in some “ouch” moments. Texting and IMing in particular can be culprits since it’s so quick and easy to send a message. As you do one of these choices, add to your list of netiquette tips.

**CHOICES – DO ONE:**

- Go through your last 50 texts. Quiz yourself about each one.** Are there any you feel ashamed about sending or that might have caused hurt? Would any cause hurt if they got forwarded? And would you be comfortable saying each thing to the recipient’s face? After your review, clear the air with a live conversation if necessary!

**OR** .....

- Interview a psychologist, guidance counselor, minister, or expert in emotional health.** Find out about how they’ve seen digital “ouches” impact young people. With this expert’s guidance, brainstorm with your group to get ideas for helping people stop these behaviors and for helping someone who’s been hurt by them. Add the ideas to your netiquette list. If this process makes you realize where some miscommunication might have happened in your life, take this chance to clear the air.

**OR** .....

- Start a kindness practice.** Every day for two weeks, go out of your way to send a message via text, e-mail, or social media praising others for something well done. Notice how other people respond, and use that information to add tips to your list. This is a great chance to repair some “ouch” moments in your own life, if any have cropped up!



 **Careers to Explore**

- Advice columnist
- Investment banker
- Journalist
- Website developer
- Tax accountant
- Author
- Businesswoman
- Book editor
- School psychologist
- Lawyer
- Human resources staff
- Magazine editor
- Investor
- Market researcher
- Advertising executive
- Salesperson
- Auctioneer

## The Whys and Hows of Commenting

Here are some ideas of why we leave comments and how we can do it constructively, adapted from the 7th and 8th grade class blog at the Joseph H. Kerr School in Snow Lake, Manitoba.

We comment ...

- 1.) To let people know they have an audience
- 2.) To encourage people to interact
- 3.) To make people think more deeply about an issue

We can contribute constructively to comment threads with these starters:

- Your writing made me form an opinion about ...
- This post is relevant because ...
- Your writing made me think that we should ...
- I wish I understood why ...
- Another thing to consider is ...
- I can relate to this ...
- I don't understand ...
- I was reminded that ...
- I found myself wondering ...

### STEP

## 3 Look at e-mail, commenting, or blogging

Everyone uses the Internet in their own way. You may post a lot of comments, belong to a gaming community, have your own blog, or share information in tweets or via e-mail. Do the choice below that's most relevant to your net self. Use what you find out to add to your netiquette rules. If you're in a Cadette group, share your new tips with them.

### CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Get into e-mail etiquette.** E-mail is used for business and more formal online communications, and being able to use it considerately and correctly is an important part of your online persona. You'll want to know how to be effective when you land that first internship. Give five businesspeople the e-mail etiquette quiz on the next page to find out what they prefer.

FOR MORE FUN: Create a top 10 list of e-mail dos and don'ts to share with your online network—you might forward it to those who are interested!

OR .....

- Find your best commenting voice.** At best, threads of commentary following blog posts or on social media profiles can be like a Q and A session after a talk, offering more ideas or support for someone's accomplishment or idea. At worst, they're places for people to have fun at others' expense. In the middle ground are comments like "cool"—they're positive, but don't encourage discussion. Find five examples of useful comments and five not-so-great comments. Review them—what do they have in common? What rules would you add to your list about useful commenting?

OR .....

- Good net sportsmanship.** Poll gamers about the kind of online sportsmanship they like to see. You might look at recent articles about gaming etiquette for ideas. Then add some tips to your growing list.

Write a comment...

To:

# E-Mail Etiquette

## Quiz

Which of these habits bothers you in an e-mail? Rank each habit from 1 to 5, with 1 being "doesn't bother me at all" and 5 being "I never want to see that happen again."

- 1.** Using all caps, which can be like SCREAMING, or not using any caps, even for names



- 2.** Using "reply all" when the information is relevant only to the sender



- 3.** Starting an e-mail without a "hello," or ending without a signature



- 4.** Using colors, emoticons, or larger fonts to indicate something is important (instead of choosing more forceful language)



- 5.** Using extra punctuation!!!!!!



- 6.** Sending a response without including the original request or thread, which can be confusing ("yes" to what?)



- 7.** Forwarding silly jokes and pictures



- 8.** Not responding in a timely fashion



- 9.** Using texting/IMing abbreviations and language in e-mails



- 10.** Not proofreading and spell-checking



- 11.** Lack of basic grammar and punctuation



- 12.** Fill in your own! \_\_\_\_\_



## STEP 4 Decide what makes a great social media profile

Consumer organizations find that teenagers tend not to use privacy settings on social media sites wisely. Often it's because they assume the information is for friends only (that's true only if you set it that way). Then there's the issue of whether friends of friends can see your info—and if you want them to. How would you feel if you went on a friend's Facebook page and saw she posted "Bored to death right now" while she was hanging out with you? Use the questions in the sidebar to guide you in this step.

### Profile Questions to Consider

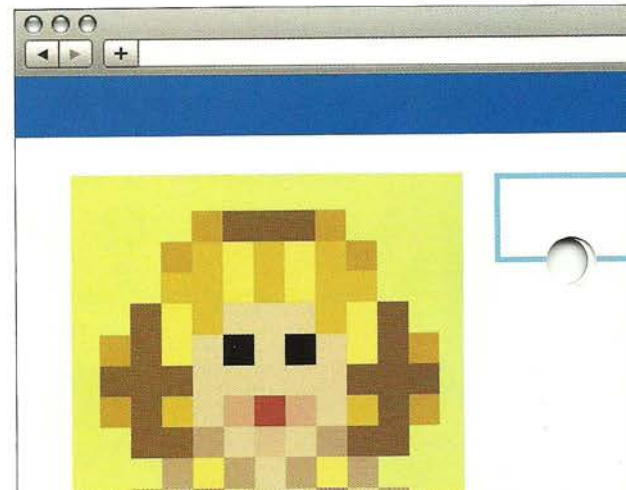


- Why do you choose to post or display in your profile the information you do? Do you try to share your most authentic self?
- What do you prefer to see on other people's profiles—and what would you prefer not to see?
- How is what you share online different from what you share face-to-face? Why?
- What do you think would happen if everyone's online presence was a truly authentic reflection of themselves? Would this help social relationships and etiquette?

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Discuss some character profiles.** Before a meeting with your Cadette group, have everyone create a pretend social media profile for a character from a book or movie. Use the same template for everyone—decide beforehand which bits of information to include. Think up some good and not-so-good details to share in your character's profile. At your meeting, discuss each, and come up with dos and don'ts for creating social media profiles.  
**OR** .....
- Get feedback on a profile of your own.** Create a profile you might use for an online group. Then ask for feedback from friends your age, older girls, and adults. (If you already have an online profile, use this choice to ask for feedback on your profile, then edit it with advice from others in your network.)  
**OR** .....
- Read three stories that discuss profiles.** These could be personal or news stories about creating them, choosing pictures for them, what they say about you, or how companies use them when hiring. Add some tips to your "rules to live by," and then use the advice to edit or create your online presence.

**TIP:** If you create a personal profile in the choice you pick, you don't need to post it to complete this step.



# STEP 5 Spread better practices

Chances are, you've got a lot of notes after the last four steps. That's a lot of great advice to share with others to help them stay safe, sound, and successful online. Spread the word about best practices in netiquette through one of these choices.

## CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Make it a pledge.** Turn your tips into a netiquette pledge. Sign the bottom to commit to putting the pledge into action—and to inspire others to do so. Then share it with friends, family, teachers, Girl Scout friends—anyone in your community, both on- and offline, who could benefit from your insights.

FOR MORE FUN: Take the best of everyone's lists, and merge them together to make a team list with your Cadette group. Share as a group, too!

OR .....

- Edit into a top 10.** Review the tips you've gathered, and see if they fit into larger categories. Can you edit them into 10 top rules—then add some pizzazz? Include art, stories that illustrate your points, anecdotes—anything that will help others understand why each tip is important. Share your list in a slide show, blog post, social media posting, PDF to an e-mail network, or in another appropriate way.

OR .....

- Present it.** Find the common themes in your tips, and turn them into a fun monologue, scene, or skit to capture on video and post to an online community. Or present it as an in-person skit at a school or Girl Scout event, or in a puppet show for a younger audience. (If you've earned your Screenwriter or Digital Movie Maker badge, you could use your skills here!)



## Before-I-Post Checklist

- ✓ Would I want this said to me?
- ✓ Would I say this in person?
- ✓ Would I say this in public—to my parents, best friends, teachers, or Girl Scout volunteers?
- ✓ Will this embarrass me or anyone else?
- ✓ Will this embarrass me or anyone else 10 years from now? (Think potential college interviewers, job interviewers, coaches, and teachers)
- ✓ Is this information safe to share?

What else would you add?

